



Rudi's Story, Chapter 4

We travelled from Berlin to Hamburg where we overnighed and took a train then from Hamburg to Bremerhaven where we took a ship, the Deutschland [laughs] to Southampton and from there to London where we spent a night or so in a hotel and then came to Bradford where the people who should have vacated the house that we wanted to move into hadn't vacated it, presumably because they thought we were never going to come so they had to pack up in a hurry so we had to stay in a little hotel which ate up our precious money which we hadn't intended to or expected to have to spend. And then we moved into a cold house, no central heating in those days, and we had to start from absolute scratch, my father having to earn money straight away which was difficult.

What were your parents allowed to bring out with you?

Fortunately all their belongings, all their furniture. We had 3 what are called lifts, not to be confused with the lifts that you find in a courthouse or a store. They were huge wooden boxes perhaps as large as a room into which they were able to put all their furniture in. Funnily enough they had to have a customs officer present to make sure we weren't taking any contraband, whatever that contraband might have been. And he said to my father, he said "If I were Jewish I would emigrate as well". Now this was November '37 so this obviously non-Jewish person saw that things weren't going right but he said that to my father.

And what about your schooling?

Schooling, well we made contact with the local rabbi for his help in one or two respects and his wife said "Well the best school in the district is the Bradford grammar school but it'll cost you money" so my parents must have said "Well so be it". So the wife of the rabbi took my mother and myself to see the headmaster of the school to see if I was suitable to enter. Now he didn't give me an entrance examination because my English wasn't good enough for that but he asked me a few questions and I had learnt English for about 18 months in Berlin as a matter of routine in my Jewish school. In Germany the method of assessing a report is from 1 – 5. A 1 is very good, 2 is good, 3 is middling, 4 not so good, 5s very bad. Now in England if you got 1 out of 10 it's a very low mark, 10/10 is very good. He took my report, my leaving report and he saw lots of 1s

and 2s and he must have thought I was a bad scholar [laughs]. I don't think we explained to him that these were good marks because we didn't know that the English way of marking was the reverse so we just thought he would understand that this was a good report. He took me and put me into a particular class and at the end of the first year I'd made such good progress that I jumped the next year and went straight into the next class.

And how did you settle in? Did you find some good school friends?

I think I've always been a bit of a loner, I didn't find many good friends nor friends really, there were one or two with whom I was friendly but not on visiting terms. That was more my fault than anybody else's I think. It wasn't any animosity on the part of any of the boys.

And what about learning your English, how soon did you...

Well I've always been a good scholar in all subjects that I tackled except history, I didn't care for history anywhere. But I was good at English when I was still in Berlin so that was a good grounding and I soon picked it up. That was no problem whatsoever.

And did you follow your love of music when you were at school?

Yes, in fact when I was still in Berlin apparently I was the music teacher's best singing pupil. I only found that out much later. He told a great-aunt of mine with whom he was on holiday together that I was his best pupil. So I always sang well. When I came to the school in Bradford the teacher, the music teacher asked me to play something on the piano but he didn't develop that very much and he didn't develop my singing at all so at the grammar school in Bradford, although I liked music, there was no development of either voice or piano playing. I had already in Germany of course I had piano lessons yes, but I didn't make much progress, so my parents thought I might try the violin which I carried on when we came to Bradford, we found a violin teacher, but I soon realised I couldn't ever play as well as Heifetz so I had to give up.